

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Balshaw's Church of England Voluntary Controlled High School

Church Road,  
Leyland.  
PR25 3AH

**Diocese: Blackburn**

LA: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2006

Date of last inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> October - 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2000

School's Unique reference number: 119775

Headteacher: Miss JM Venn

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carol Berry

#### School context

Balshaw's is a voluntary controlled comprehensive school of 915 pupils situated in Leyland. Most of its pupils are admitted to the school on the basis of criteria relating to where they live or because siblings attend the school. The majority of pupils are white British with 4% pupils from ethnic minorities. The school is a specialist engineering college.

#### Summary Judgement

Balshaw's is a good Christian school with some outstanding features. Excellent relationships between pupils and teachers mean that pupils feel valued and enjoy learning. The exceptional care and concern shown for pupils are clearly founded on Christian values, which underpin all aspects of school life. In this caring environment pupils are able to achieve their potential in personal as well as academic terms.

#### Established strengths

- The strong and explicitly acknowledged Christian ethos, particularly evident in excellent relationships based on Christian values.
- The head teacher's outstanding leadership and clear vision for Christian distinctiveness.
- The development of spirituality across the curriculum.

#### Focus for development

- Develop and introduce a broad and balanced programme of themes for worship.
- To involve staff, governors, pupils and parents with the new youth worker in evaluating the impact on pupils of the school's Christian ethos.
- To explore possibilities for inspiring and contemporary expressions of Christianity that communicate effectively to young people, particularly to pupils who have little contact with church outside school.

#### How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The way in which Balshaw's meets the needs of all its learners through its distinctive Christian character is outstanding. Clearly stated Christian values underpin the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers. There is a culture of achievement that values individuals; for example, a display celebrated talents as diverse as music, sport and tree climbing. The high level of trust between pupils and staff was demonstrated by one teacher who shared her recent experience of bereavement during a lesson on remembering the holocaust. As a result of these trusting relationships, personal development is outstanding, pupils enjoy learning and progress made is good. Pupils speak in glowing terms of their teachers and have confidence that they listen and support them in times of difficulty. Pupils are encouraged to show care for each other, for example, through 'Peer Support' and they are being helped to cope with bereavement as they work with staff and governors to plan a memorial garden. They are reminded of the school's Christian character by the school environment, which is rich in Christian symbols and displays that challenge pupils to think deeply. For example, in the entrance hall there is a candle that is lit at times of special concern, and Christian values appear at the foot of a cross. RE makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, particularly at KS 4, through consideration of contemporary issues and through promoting respect for different religions and cultures. Upper school pupils feel that different views are respected and they enjoy discussing different perspectives. There are excellent opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum; for

example, the school's commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day which is promoted by the History department and, in the PE department, the notice on the changing rooms, "Thank you for our God given talents". The school has identified links between its Christian distinctiveness and its status as an engineering college with the result that pupils are aware of the impact of faith on working life. For example, pupils have reflected on God as an engineer, considered ethical issues during engineering workshop activities and identified church buildings where modern technology has been used to provide an environment that promotes reflection and worship.

#### **What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**

Worship has a good impact on the school community. Pupils recognise the importance of worship because staff and pupils put time and effort into preparing for worship. Pupils have regular opportunities to contribute to worship and senior pupils regularly lead worship. The head teacher speaks with conviction of her own faith and so gives pupils insight into living the Christian faith. She ensures that worship is consistently of a high standard by offering time and resources to support those leading worship. Whilst the planning of individual acts of worship is good there is no planning of themes for worship to ensure that pupils encounter an appropriate range of issues through the year and this is an area for development. Worship is always Christian in character and honours the Anglican tradition. Festivals are celebrated by communion services attended by staff, governors and sometimes pupils. At Easter, pupils found a multi-media presentation of the Easter message very moving. The use of music within worship, time for reflection, and symbols such as candles help to provide a quiet and thoughtful start to the day, which is appreciated by pupils. Worship provides opportunities for spiritual development for all pupils, regardless of their beliefs. Pupils make a valuable contribution to worship through membership of the worship group, by leading worship and by their production of some of the 'Thought for the Day' materials used in tutorial worship. This means that worship is relevant and pupils listen more readily because peer voices are speaking. Pupils' experience of worship has been enriched by the close partnership with the local church and the regular involvement in the worship group of foundation governors. Some visitors arranged by local churches have provided memorable worship and have contributed to pupils' positive attitudes to worship, for example, 'British Youth for Christ' and the 'Big Spoon Band'. One outcome of this close partnership between school and church is the successful 'What if?' group led by the local church which provides pupils with a forum for discussing issues of life and faith. The majority of pupils at Balshaw's have no involvement with church outside school. The school now has an opportunity to collaborate with the new Youth Worker to explore inspirational and contemporary expressions of the Christian faith which will be particularly accessible to these pupils.

#### **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?**

Leadership and management of the school as a church school are good. The head teacher's outstanding leadership and clear vision for implementing Christian distinctiveness have played a significant part in developing the strong Christian ethos of this Church school. She has consistently challenged the school to reflect on its Christian foundation, for example, in her challenge to all departments to identify opportunities for spiritual development. Parents speak highly of the care and concern shown by all staff and in particular by the head teacher. Governors make an active contribution to school life and there is an exceptionally strong sense of partnership between school and church. This partnership has resulted in the appointment of a Christian Youth Worker from September. The school governors have had little opportunity so far to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a Church school. A survey of pupil views on worship took place a few years ago, but an area for development is the involvement of the wider school community in considering the impact upon pupils of the school's Christian distinctiveness. The school's Christian character is evident in the prospectus and in its mission statement. Understanding of what it means to be a Christian school has been enhanced by the statement of Christian beliefs at the start of all written policies.